An Office of Ethics: meetings, roles and moral enthusiasm in animal protection.

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Abstract

This article explores the relationship between meetings and organisational ethics in an animal protection charity in Scotland. Here, recent 'professionalisation' has seen the late introduction of an ethics of office and accompanying impersonalization of roles. A consequent struggle emerges over what the relationship should be between the core message of the organisation, as an office of animal ethics, and the 'personal' principles or ethical commitment of individual staff members. All of this comes to a head when persons, and office-holders, meet.

Introduction:

In this essay I am interested in the relationship between formal meetings and organisational ethics. Driven through my ethnography of an animal protection charity in Scotland, it seeks to explore how the core aim of the organisation–'to secure proper respect for animals and inspire a more compassionate society'–plays out through the ordinary forms of administrative procedure in the third sector. The focus is partly prompted by recent anthropological attention to the 'ethical' as a dimension or modality of practice (Lambek 2010: 10; & see Laidlaw 2010, 2013). As its mission statement suggests, the charity views itself as values-led, involved in 'ethical campaigning'. Indeed, their use of the term draws on a common understanding of ethical practice, as both the identification of a positive value to be placed on specific kinds of acts (i.e. those compassionate or respectful of animals) and a desire to situate

organizational action itself within a general field of ethics (i.e. that of animal welfare & sentience debates) where criteria are laid out and judgements exercised (Lambek 2010: 9). But as a property of action as much as thought (2010: 14), it also implies a process by which the ethical subject of animal protection itself becomes constituted. The charity is publicly committed to the promotion of certain kinds of relationship to self, which are in turn invoked within the organisation, registered and sometimes subtly refashioned at the times when staff members meet.

Describing the organisational ethics of a body that defines its rationale for existence as ethical obviously places this study in a tradition that describes and examines the institutionalization of moral concern; in this essay, for example, a background influence is the analysis provided by Hopgood (2006) of organizational development at Amnesty International. Presented as a 'fascinating story of practical morality and its possibilities and problems' (2006: 222), the book is also an account of the 'infiltration of the mechanisms and ideas of capital into all areas of not-for-profit and private life' (2006: 134). But as Hopgood's nuanced description makes clear that 'infiltration', and the general process of convergence between what were before radically distinct 'sectors' of life, impacts ethical organizations in very different ways. The indeterminacy is in part down to the kind of moral authority that such bodies historically claim and to the ethos that staff inherit and wish to struggle to maintain; but it is also due to differences in organizational size. Whereas large not-for-profit organizations such as Amnesty International started to negotiate a shift to 'modernization' and a new managerial culture in the last decade or so of the twentieth century, for a raft of small charitable organizations the pressure to modernize was considerably delayed.

A desire to respect those specificities prompts me to also engage with the re emergent interest in the moral attributes of the concept of 'office' (du Gay 2000, 2006, 2008; Strathern 2009; Corsín Jiménez 2015). In this literature, that recombines old insights on the notion of administrative responsibility and the values of public persona from Weber and from debates in mid twentieth century anthropology, most notably the work of Fortes, attention falls on the specific competencies of office and on the vital quality of impersonality attached to them. The approach, I would suggest, seems to open new ways to assess the ethical mark of organisational structure and the role of the formal meeting within it. In particular, I am influenced by the observations of du Gay (2000, 2006, 2008) on dramatic shifts in the culture of public governance in the UK. Since the late twentieth century, he argues, there has been a concerted attack on the 'ethics of office', the longstanding principle that adherence to procedure and the tasks of bureaucratic roles goes hand in hand with a deliberate subordination of personal moral enthusiasms (2008: 17). The ethical commitment of the civil servant traditionally derives from this active self-denial, cultivated through a sense of duty or vocational obligation to the purpose of a higher authority. Indeed, as du Gay points out, until relatively recently the studied impersonality or indifference of the state bureaucrat was marked as a 'positive moral achievement'. Today, however, the subservience to office seems to clash with a widespread presumption that ethical action can only proceed through the exercise of moral autonomy or individual conscience-driven judgement; so that 'to hold a subaltern status and to exercise moral agency are represented as fundamentally incompatible' (2008: 2). Coupled with the introduction of new brands of managerialism, this has resulted in the increasing personalization of public offices, posing a threat, as du Gay would have it, to the

constitutional performance of the civil service and its conventional concept of the moral agent.

In this account, one of the chief casualties of a weakened ethic of office is precisely the place and ethos of formal meetings in the running of governmental administration. Where politicians start introducing external 'special advisors' or encouraging an entrepreneurial spirit among senior civil servants, who consequently begin to view public offices as an 'extension of their own will and ideological commitment' (2008: 10), it is noted that the procedural basis for meeting starts to breakdown. A new culture of informality emerges among those who attend meetings (civil servants, special advisors & politicians), with a consequent lapse in adherence to bureaucratic due process. Careful and precise notation becomes irregular, for instance; in some meetings, minutes are no longer taken, making it hard to document who has said what and even that meetings have actually taken place (2008: 20). This is complicated by the fact that state bureaucrats no longer fully control the process or composition of those formal meetings that do occur; the latter constitute a space of redefined encounters. When reconceived as newly responsive to or representative of 'the popular will' (2008: 7), instead of subservient to the purpose of office, for example, office-holders find themselves subject to 'consumer capture,' required to meet the priorities of citizen or user-group bodies outside the administration (2008: 9). Likewise, a new expectation that civil servants should be autonomous agents of conscience, prepared to act, when necessary, upon their own sense of social responsibility, leads to an assumption that meetings between office-holders will now include 'inner moral audit' of the roles assigned them. According to du Gay, this 'personalist morality' makes it increasingly hard to sustain 'the idea that the state bureaucracy is a substantive ethical domain in its own right' (2008: 11). In this

climate, the formal meeting and its accompanying technologies of procedure, such as minute-taking, tend to appear as just overly bureaucratic, outmoded and inefficient ways of delivering the outcomes that matter.

I am not qualified to assess the historical accuracy of the narrative of public administration that du Gay provides. Nevertheless, I find his identification of shifts in organisational ethics, and the consequences for the implied ethos of formal meetings, highly provocative. This includes his observation that conceptions of moral agency based on abnegation or the subordination of the person to the higher authority of office have suffered a contemporary collapse. In particular, I am struck by the idea that in the realm of governmental and political action the personalization of roles constitutes a moral crisis. For the suggestion helps throw into relief a quite different trajectory in the relationship between formal meetings and organizational ethics, this time within the charitable sector, and more specifically the small Scottish animal protection agency I worked with. Unlike the civil service, this is an organisation founded on the presumption that participation in meetings and other forms of administrative procedure are driven by personal conviction and shared ethical feeling; the charity was established in Edinburgh early in the twentieth century, originally conceived as an anti-vivisection campaigning group and then diversifying over the years to become a generalist advocate for animal welfare. Both volunteers and paid colleagues are assumed to participate in work tasks exactly because they recognise a natural convergence of private and organisational values. In fact, the success of the charity is traditionally held to rest on the energy generated by the moral enthusiasm of its staff. In this very different organizational context, it almost appears that a counter narrative to du Gay's tale now exists. For members of staff identify the near past as a period when they were introduced to a new principle of impersonality in their

working lives, to something we might recognise as akin to an ethic of office (while in du Gay's account new cultures of managerialism are a threat to this bureaucratic principle, I want to argue that for the staff members of the animal protection charity I worked with managerial innovation and the ethics of office appeared somehow combined). For many of them, the change represented their ethical organisation's own historical crisis.[1]

In what follows then I am interested to explore what happens to formal meetings when the personalist morality that originally grounded them is challenged by an organisational ethics centred on the separation of competency or task from individual moral conscience. This includes a look at the rise and fall of particular kinds of official meeting within the animal protection organisation and a look at the way these meetings animate the tension between the attributes of competing moral agencies and ethical subjects. When subservience to office, and the accompanying principle of indifference or impersonality, appears as a new, alternative form of ethical labour in the charity, the question suddenly becomes who is meeting and what sort of encounter is taking place. In many ways, this essay is an old-fashioned ethnography about persons and roles.

Team Meeting:

At the animal protection charity I worked with, one kind of formal meeting took place every two weeks, and constituted a regular feature of the organisational calendar. On the allotted time, usually 2pm on a Wednesday, Shelia, the office manager, would go round the six rooms of the charity's office gathering staff up from their respective desks and ushering them into the boardroom. The 'team meeting', as it was called, lasted about an hour, and consisted of a round-the-table report from

each member of staff on their most recent work activities. It began when everyone arrived, casual chat had died down and the nominated Chair called a start. Individuals waited until invited to report and typically spoke with the aid of prepared notes on sheets of paper or in personal organisers.

Shelia: 'A few quick notices [report continues]... The Staff Handbook is being constantly renewed, so can you let me know when you are ill and out of the office, to allow me to work out sick pay. Also, if you leave [the charity] it has been decided we won't give out full, personal references, just general references. Although you can of course ask colleagues to write a personal reference about levels of performance etc. on your behalf.

Right, lets hear other updates. Craig?'

Craig: 'Thanks. I've been working on the animal sentience programme of work [report continues]… That's it.'

Shelia: 'Maire.'

Mairi: 'Ok. I've been mainly processing cheques coming in from the money box appeal, entering all the people in the database. We are up to 20,000 active names [report continues]… Finally, can I ask if someone takes a phone call from a supporter can you enter the details in the database too.'

[Shelia next nods to Elaine, who sits beside Maire]

Elaine: 'Right now I am trying to organize a calendar we can all use [report continues until end]…'

Shelia: 'Thanks Elaine. David.'

David: ‘We are gearing up to the Movie Viral Awards, keeping a keen eye on that [report continues]… also I’ve been making sure the snaring video is seen by everyone.’

Eilidh: ‘Where are we with Facebook and Twitter numbers?’

David: ‘Last look, about 500 or so followers on Twitter and 800 or so on Facebook [report continues until end]…’

[Shelia nods to Sarah]

Sarah: ‘Yup. Well I’ve been busy getting the funding applications out for the early years education project. And been working with the customer marketing people and on the sponsored run. I’ve got a couple more signed up for that… [report continues until end & then she turns to woman beside her]’

Maggie: ‘Not surprisingly, its been dominated by the snaring campaign. The parliamentary briefing went well I think; good turnout of MSPs [Members of Scottish Parliament]... I want to do another briefing featuring gamekeepers. Hope to set that up for February 8th [report continues]… As well as the snare ban, we need to lobby on other components of the Bill, especially annual review and training. I would say the MSPs are definitely listening and definitely engaged.’

Shelia: ‘Barry.’

Barry: ‘Happy New Year everyone! Bit late I know. But I feel it will be a good year for us. I can confirm that the snares shown in the video are now all gone from the [shooting] estate. They must have seen the film too and recognised their own traps [report continues until end]…’

Eilidh: ‘Thanks Barry. So far, the memorial appeal has raised about £3000, which is great. I will send out a thank you and a reminder to those who have not yet responded [report continues]… Elaine will be trying to set up a training day; the

purpose is to allow us to have time together as a team. I will also be looking a little bit into the team structure, maybe setting up supervisions or one-to-one support sessions [report continues until end]…'

Shelia: 'Ok, Euan.'

Euan: 'Three things really. We've had a lot of inquiries about the culling policy at Edinburgh Zoo. There will be something in the Daily Mail on the weekend and I expect to get more press on this [report continues]… I've been working on a story with [another animal welfare charity] around farm assurance food labelling. There will be a few teaser stories put out but once the report is published the push will get bigger [report continues until end]…'

[Shelia nods to the final staff member]

Fraser: 'Right, here it is [he tables a budget report]. As you know, it was a tough year last year but we still increased income. I want us to keep ramping it up. You will see we had £300,000 down for Trusts and Foundations, but we had no history of making those applications [report continues]… I've been working with Craig on the animal sentience programme and with Barry on the funding of investigations. I think we should also do something at the training day on being a fundraiser and on donor-led organisations [report continues until end & meeting concludes]…'

The transcript extract above is from one particular team meeting, but is typical of its reporting form. Sometimes additional business might be tagged onto the end of the meeting or points of extended clarification interjected during individual reports, but generally the structure remained constant. Indeed, the team meeting was the only scheduled event, barring work appointments that took staff outside of the charity's

office, which everyone attended. For me, these meetings therefore represented the best chance of catching up with the dispersed and deskbound activities of individuals, an opportunity to find out what each one had been doing for the previous fortnight. This was the case too for members of staff. Although some worked side-by-side in the same room, even sometimes in inter-dependent roles (as part of the 'fundraising team', for instance), most had only an incomplete sense of the detailed day-to-day work of colleagues. What knowledge they did have was often drawn from attendance at other smaller formal meetings called to address a specific task or project of work, or from casual conversation over lunch or tea in the staff kitchen. The team meeting then was viewed as a highly effective procedure for literally pulling colleagues together, making their individual and combined labour visible, and thus communicating what was going on across the charity.

Its efficiency was also indexed in the 'Team Meeting- Agenda' document that Shelia usually pre-circulated. A sparse and succinct, on the face of it almost pointless text, the Agenda simply enumerated the action of reporting itself. So in the example reproduced on the opposite page, 'Updates' is agenda point one; it seems to require no further specification.[2] Point two, 'Volunteer tasks', refers to the identification of work assignments for unpaid colleagues, organizational needs that are themselves seen to only emerge out of the very process of updating. The final two agenda points are procedural to the running of the team meeting; the duty of 'Chair' is shared, all staff as members of the office 'team' taking a turn over the course of the year, and 'Any other business' leaves space for emergency discussions that exceed the remit of the individual report. It is then as updatable subjects that colleagues first and foremost come to know one another in the team meeting. They are persons assumed

to have something to disclose, the embodiment of past, present and anticipated future activity.

TEAM MEETING – AGENDA

Chair -

1. Updates

2. Volunteer tasks

3. Chair for next meeting

4. Any other business

When I first arrived at the charity, in early 2010, the team meeting was also a fairly new phenomenon. The need for regular updating was partly a result of the rapid expansion in staff numbers (the previous two years had seen a three fold increase in salaried employees, from four to thirteen), which meant knowledge of collegial activity became a problem of a different scale and that a quorum of bodies existed to imagine that a label of association like 'team', and even the idea of there being teams within the team, might now be appropriate. However, the rise of the team meeting also indexed new divisions of labour, and a new managerial emphasis on the professionalization of roles. As staff increased, so the relationship between person and role individualized; the general competency of the original, much smaller workforce replaced by a growing range of specialized competencies owned by or attached to named office-holders. So Shelia, as well as acting as Chair in the quoted extract above, also updates the activities and outlook of Office Manager; Craig reports on the activities of the Science and Research Manager; Maire provides an update from Supporter Services; Elaine speaks as the Personal Assistant to the Chief Executive Officer; David responds to an interjected query and updates from the office of Movement Builder; Sarah reports on what the Assistant Fundraiser has done; Maggie accounts for the time and duties of Policy Director; Barry updates the work of the Investigations Officer; Eilidh informs and speaks from the perspective of the Chief Executive Officer; Euan reports on the activities of the Communications Officer and Fraser does the same from the outlook of Fundraising Director. Indeed, in many ways the team meeting existed to reflect that new reality; its round-the-table reporting scheme operating as a mechanism for formally hearing from the various offices of the charitable organisation.

Just as the status of office-holder is crucial to the attributes of the updatable subject, so the team meeting is essentially then an encounter between or report from the perspective of those organizational roles. In these update sessions, members of staff are quite careful to connect what they have done to the remit of the professional role and to generally offer opinion on that basis. In fact, when individuals veer too far from their duties or the outlook of office, for example in offering judgment or suggestions for the activity of other office-holders, the meeting can become tense. There is a strong sense of role-ownership, of pride in expertise; and a corresponding expectation that at least in the team meeting any interaction between persons will mirror the interaction between roles. This is exemplified in the ethos of complementarity. A good team meeting will involve reports that also build and respond to the accumulation of updates; the Fundraising Director, for instance, adding a fundraising component to the planned training day announced by the Chief Executive Officer, or the Communications Officer offering an idea for getting the parliamentary briefings of the Policy Director 'pushed' in the press. Likewise, part of the value of addressing 'Volunteer tasks' after the updates is attached to the notion that reports may reveal forms of 'support' needed for specific roles. Unpaid colleagues are usually slotted in in this fashion, assigned for a period to the direction of an office-holder who has recognised an activity (usually figured as unskilled) that requires labour.

It is possible, I think, to identify here the introduction of a 'frisson' (see Strathern 2009) between person and office. Indeed, the old anthropological notion, led by Fortes (1962), of an office as a generalized term for roles and status, which combine and endure in perpetuity, ritually enacted and occupied by a succession of individuals who imagine the office bestows them with power and perspective, has an

interesting currency in this situation. As does the argument that roles and status require a material embodiment for that power to be recognised and assigned (Fortes 1969; & see Strathern 1998). There may be no equivalent to the Ashanti stool, but it seems that the team meeting succeeds in displaying the transformed authority of staff members, offering them a space in which the incumbent's embodiment of that immaterial professional role is made visible. Certainly, there is a sense in which the contributions of staff become newly individualized through specialist offices; those who previously may have worked together, in a minimally hierarchical structure where tasks were often in practice shared, find in the expanded organisation that it is now a formalised relationship to role that defines the person. But this includes, as Strathern highlights, the equivocating awareness that the concept of '"person" can in fact occupy either side of the apparent divide between self/individual and office' (2009: 133-134). In the team meeting, Maggie, for instance, can appear to herself and others as either an individual person or as a persona, someone who acts the part of Policy Director; similarly, in updating the activities of the Movement Builder, David can be taken to instantiate a source of authority beyond himself that bestows a 'personal' perspective and/or a source of authority beyond the office, that lies within the individual. It is this capacity to view the person twice, in overlapping versions, that one might claim as another product of the team meeting.

Such equivocation can have interesting consequences for the notion of the 'ethical' as a modality of practice both within the person and within the organisation. As previously highlighted, the history of the charity reveals a body in which private and public moral enthusiasm work in tandem. Individuals join the charity because its commitment 'to secure proper respect for animals and inspire a more compassionate society' is commensurate with their own principles. Unlike the traditional ethical

labour of publication administration, as described by du Gay (2006: 5), subordination to work then does not require an abnegation or self-denial of personal moral convictions. Indeed, it is that very conviction that is regularly seen to fuel the activity of the organisation. This is because the enthusiasm of personal principle is taken to motivate charitable work but in addition because it is taken to make it sustainable (like many other charity workers, employees often signal that they accept lower salaries as the price for doing vocational and virtuous labour). Personal conviction, they claim, is also what keeps them attentive to office tasks.

Going round the table of the team meeting, one finds numerous examples of this continuity. Take Maire, for instance, who updates from the perspective of Supporter Services; her official job title is 'Database Administrator'. Born and still living in the town of Kirkcaldy, Maire took up her current post with the organisation the year before I arrived. Previously, she had done part time voluntary work in the charity; indeed, Maire has been a signed-up supporter of the animal protection organization since the early 1990s when she came across one of their campaign stalls in Edinburgh. Like many other members of staff, she connects her conversion to the principles of respect and compassion for animals with a prior childhood experience of affinity with particular creatures; in her case through a special connection with household cats and with stray dogs that she would sometimes bring back to the family home. The translation of this ethical feeling into a personal conviction would, like many other members of staff, lead her over time to give up eating meat and wearing leather (Maire is a vegetarian, but a lot of her colleagues are vegan), and eventually to seek out a form of work that supported and promoted what she identified as an ethical life. As Maire put it, 'obviously I work for [the charity] and I work to their values and their mission, but that's all part of what I believe personally.' While processing

donations and entering supporter details on the office database is largely tedious work, she knows that it serves the interests of animal protection and hence her own core beliefs.

There is no immediate reason why a complexification and professionalization of roles threatens that ethical bearing. Staff may formalize the adoption of the perspective of office-holder in the team meeting, in the process newly enacting a separation between the persona and individuality of the person, but that subordination to role can still be seen to operate in the service of private moral enthusiasm. Indeed, staff members regularly connect pride in expertise and specialized competency with pride in contributing to their own and the organization's ethical goals. Being professional, disciplining the person to the impersonal and no longer explicitly ethical purpose of office-based competency, can appear as a better, more effective way of demonstrating responsibility to individual conscience.

While Maire's work of data entry is relatively mechanical and unskilled, the role provides a means of contributing to a specific office, from whose perspective she can confidently speak in team meetings. In this regard, subordinating to Supporter Services empowers an outlook within the organisation, to which she can attach, enlarging a sense of individual contribution. Those with more skilled tasks, whose job title may coincide with or encompass the status of office itself, also view the perspective of professional role as an enhancement of what personal commitment can achieve. David, for instance, who entered the charitable organisation some months after me, saw the new post of Movement Builder (set-up to create a digital supporter base for the animal protection charity) as an opportunity to put his specialist social media knowledge and marketing qualifications in the service of what he regarded as a good cause. Born and raised in the northern English town of Lancaster, but with both

parents originally from Glasgow, David, like Maire, reported childhood empathy for household pets as a spark to involvement in animal welfare causes. He became a junior supporter of several animal campaigning groups at the age of eleven, remaining active throughout his university years, when he also took up a commitment to vegetarianism and then veganism. 'The ethical issue for me,' he explained, 'is I just don't feel that animals should be there for us to abuse. You know, we don't have a right of dominion.' His compassion for animals informs his life choices, including his decision to join the charity, but for him the capacity to speak with the authority of marketing and social media expertize, embodied in the office of Movement Builder, makes that compassion operational at an entirely new scale.

In this scenario, private moral conviction does not personalize roles, but it does make the impersonality of competency valuable to the individual person. However, as the charity grew and the number of roles expanded, the frisson between person and office also created an organisational dilemma. At its heart was a fear that professionalization might not only separate the persona of office from the individuality of person, but in addition might allow the possibility of colleagues who met the remit of competency or office purpose but lacked a history of personal commitment to animal welfare issues. That is, the introduction of someone who can fulfil the duties of role and thus effectively promote the mission statement of the charity without holding that ethical purpose or feeling in the individual person.

Although this anxiety was attached to the way new posts were generally advertised (mainly centred on the skill-sets needed to meet the role) and to the unsettlement caused by the quite sudden arrival of a number of new colleagues, most of them strangers to existing staff, it really focused on the installation of the office of Fundraising Director. Like other specialised roles, colleagues recognised that this

office could be vital to the future effectiveness of the charity. Yet, in the individual person of Fraser a suspicion arose that the impersonality of office masked a personal indifference to many of the core values of animal protection. This was not helped by the fact that Fraser had a known professional background working in environmental charities; in many ways, conservation and animal welfare exist in tension, defined in part against each other (see Reed 2015). Suspicion also arose from his persistent failure to express sufficient outrage at cases of animal abuse highlighted in the media and from his lack of engagement in the customary enthusiastic ethical discussions that often took place during tea and lunch breaks. Fraser, it was noted, was also conspicuously silent on his personal history (this was largely a blank to me too; although we had many conversations about the technique and strategies of fundraising, Fraser was the only member of the charity staff who refused to be interviewed). He never voiced, for instance, a biographical narrative of the kind commonly exchanged by others (i.e. stories of awakenings through childhood encounters with pets or wild visitors to the family garden) nor offered affectionate tales of empathetic relationships with household or rescue animals today. Finally, it was widely known that Fraser ate meat and that he wore leather shoes; in short, there was little evidence of the typical signs of an expected personal ethical bearing.

Returning to the team meeting then, we can perhaps identify another dimension to the achievement of role perspective. As well as updating the activities and outlook of office, and in so doing opening a space for the person to occupy a position either side of the divide between role competency and principled self, the team meeting introduces the possibility of a complete disjunction between commitment to office and commitment to expected ethical feeling. This includes the possibility that for some serving the office and doing-the-job well provides its own

satisfaction, divorced from either the consequences of promoting organisational values or the drive of personal conviction. For many staff, however, the likelihood that Fraser and persons like him to come may lack any private moral enthusiasm for the ethical goals they are professionally tasked to enact remained deeply troubling[3]. Sitting round the table of the team meeting, they started to wonder for the first time whether some colleagues were only fully present in their impersonal office-holding persona. The fear was not just that Fraser lacked the conscience or ethical feeling for animals that everyone previously assumed united the individuality of persons and hence established a common ethos. It was also that the personal dimension of Fraser may be entirely absent or withheld from their interactions. Could Fraser present them with an impersonal person, one without the frisson between individual and office, available to them only through the updates of the Fundraising Director. The prospect haunted many.

No AGM:

If the professionalization and expansion of this organisation led to the rise of one kind of formal meeting, then it also led to the demise of another. Crucially tied into its restructuring was a commitment to end the annual charge of membership dues for supporters of the charity, a decision that also meant there was no longer a need to hold an AGM or Annual General Meeting in public (the meeting notionally continued as an in-house and closed annual presentation by the CEO to the charity's Board of Trustees). The latter was a statutory requirement of organisations that formalised membership through subscription, a traditional act of charitable association that drew out an obligation to give a public account of that body's activities for each year. While the AGM followed an established procedure, it was also a notoriously

uncontrolled event. Charitable bodies could never be quite sure who would turn-up, what they might say and in what directions their interventions might take the meeting. It was also an occasion that, like the expense of collecting membership dues itself, came at a financial cost for the organisation; the animal protection charity was not alone among third sector groups in concluding they were better off without it. Nevertheless, the end of the open-door AGM signalled the termination of any formal gathering between staff and the organisation's supporters.

However, this curtailment of established meeting was not just a by-product of practical managerial administration; it was part of a wider radical reconceptualization of what the ethical organisation was there to do. Instead of continuing to view itself as a body that looked after and represented the moral interests of a public constituency, narrowly defined as its membership, the charity now marked itself as the facilitator of a 'movement'. When I first started coming into the office, staff had only recently embarked on the transformation, which the expansion and specialization of roles was meant in large degree to enable. At its core was a desire to shift organisational attention from campaigning and lobbying on behalf of supporters to that of assisting the ethical development of individual members of the public towards animal welfare principles.[4] The movement was to be composed and led, not by the charity, but by these morally renewed and conscience-bearing subjects, chiefly defined and empowered by their status as consumers, identified as out there in the world. Part of the perceived role of the organisation was to inspire 'ethical buying' or the compassionate choice and to help each one progress along his or her animal-friendly lifestyle, from whatever point in their own ethical journey they were at. This might mean facilitating the individual's shift from vegetarianism to veganism, or from low to high welfare standard meat consumption. It might also mean converting the

supporter from charitable ‘donor’ (the restructuring of the organisation was also tied to a new financial model of growth based on monthly direct-debit donation rather than annual subscription and legacies) to participant in charitable ‘actions’, or, even better, assisting them in developing their own independent animal welfare activism. From this new perspective, the charity was there to serve the movement, a dispersed network of individual persons envisaged as acting alone, or sometimes in combination, to change themselves and hence the ethical complexion of the world around them.

So the professionalization of staff competencies embodied in the team meeting actually ran in tandem with a refocusing on or highlighting of the moral autonomy and enthusiasm of individual members of the public. While the charity might not have experienced a shift, equivalent to that described in public administration in the United Kingdom, towards the personalization of roles within the organisation, it did seem to advocate for the personalization of a role outside it: that assigned to the supporter-consumer or movement mobilizer. Indeed, organisational attention fell on the moral competency of this newly visible conscience-bearing subject. In such a transformation the charity not only facilitates the supporter’s personal or lifestyle development, it and its workforce can become figured as supporters of the movement too. Seen from this perspective, the impersonalisation of Fraser begins to break down a little. For the attributes (i.e. meat-eater, leather shoe wearer, environmentalist background, lack of outrage) that led some colleagues to view him with suspicion can also be seen as markers of his stage on his own personal ethical journey towards animal friendly values. Indeed, I think Fraser joined the organisation in part because he bought into the notion of a new, alternative ‘mainstream’ and less ‘moralistic’ animal protection charity, assistant to a multi-stage movement of self-improvers that offered support

from wherever the individual began. Sitting round the table at the team meeting, it is possible that to him colleagues failed to embrace the new ethos of the organisation, that is to withdraw their ethical judgement and to concentrate instead on the moral competency that each person is ready at this point in time to submit to enhancement.

Evaluation meeting:

I want to conclude with an anecdote from a third kind of organisational meeting. Unlike the team meeting (and the retracted AGM), this formal gathering was a one-off affair, called to address a specific task of work, the labour of 'evaluation' (see Yarrow this volume) However, it was not like other forms of task-oriented meetings that I attended, those typically focused on planning for a concrete activity such as composing a response to a Westminster or Scottish government consultation exercise or putting together a package of communication strategies to assist a fundraising appeal. Instead, this was a daylong event called to evaluate the charitable organisation itself. Held just two years after I began my research, the meeting constituted a reaction to a very different kind of historical crisis for the charity, the imminent and quite unexpected threat of insolvency and disbandment.[5]

Like many groups in the third sector in the UK, the animal protection charity I worked with experienced the effects of the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-8 in delayed form. The bite on many charitable incomes only really started to hit hard towards the end of 2010; a point illustrated by the fact that this organisation felt confident enough to invest in expansion and an accompanying radical restructuring of organisational goals in the immediate years after the Crisis began. By the second half of 2011 it was evident, however, that the new model of financial growth for the charity, upon which the increase in staff numbers was based, had failed to be realised

(both direct debit monthly payments from members of the public and corporate donations simply didn't take-off). As a result, the charity was forced to introduce harsh and quite sudden retrenchment strategies. First and foremost, this meant a severe reduction in staff numbers; so that by the end of 2011 over half of the thirteen salaried employees had left (including Sarah, David and Fraser) and by the middle of 2012 the organisation was back to a total of four employees. Each of those remaining had curtailed hours, down to working either a three or four-day week. As a whole the charitable organisation was in survival mode, reduced to budgeting for activities and looking no more than eight months ahead.

Returning to the status and professionalization of roles, the retrenchment also threw-up a series of immediate dilemmas for the continuing relationship between person and office. Indeed, to me, it is hard not to read the response to retrenchment as a crisis of office; once again I am reminded of the lessons of Fortes. Most obviously, those that remained in post, albeit part-time, were faced by a challenge of motivation; not just because colleagues had lost their jobs but because the roles they continued to hold seemed to suddenly lack purchase with reality. As Maggie put it to me, 'I may still be the Policy Director, but of what?' The existential question of what was left for the office-holder to actually enact in an organisation facing extinction was accompanied by another kind of role dilemma. As everyone pointed out, the charitable organisation now had more roles or offices than office-holders (for Fortes [1962: 68-70], the unoccupied office is not just futile but dangerous, disrupting the ideal of succession and perpetuity that grounds it). Perhaps even more pressing was the recurring prospect that those office-holders that did remain might outlive their role or office in the charity!

Not surprisingly, these dilemmas had the effect of detaching persons from offices, or more precisely of making the individual person appear newly separated from the persona and perspective of the role-holder. If the latter appeared increasingly fragile, the former seemed increasingly durable and its visibility heightened. Indeed, a new kind of equivalence seemed to arise between these individual persons, not so much as private moral enthusiasts nor as conscience-bearing consumer subjects within a movement of self-improvers, but as vulnerable employees, each with bills to pay and families to feed. The emphasis also attached an equivalence of emotion; after the redundancies and retrenchment, these were individual persons that shared experiences of sadness, resentment, anger and frustration. The self-conscious way in which those left and still attending formal meetings identified as survivors highlighted a further kind of renewed separation, this time between the outside or external perspective on the charity (as ethical organisation continuing to register its effects in the public world of animal welfare) and the perspective from the inside, where role-holding and the activities of office appeared a precarious, ever more unsustainable outlook. It was in this atmosphere then that the evaluation meeting took place.

As befitting a gathering in a time of crisis, the charitable organisation opted to bring in an outside expert, from another Scottish charity specializing in third sector evaluation, to lead it. After 'ice breaker' exercises between us (i.e. myself; Eilidh, the CEO; Maggie, the Policy Director; Euan, the Communications Office; and Maire, the Database Administrator from Supporter Services), the 'evaluator' introduced the task for the day. Our aim, we were told, was to take the charity's strategic plan, scripted two years earlier to meet the goals of the expanded organisation, and to 'distil it' in order to create and agree a 'baseline of activities' for the charity going forward. The meeting, the evaluator explained, was also about remotivating staff, team-building

and instilling new purpose in those that remained. It was made clear that in this work of evaluation everyone should contribute as an independent voice, regardless of roles or organisational hierarchy. Staff needed to come together and work as a team of individual persons before speaking once again from the perspective of office.

The rest of the day was devoted to this labour. Prompted by the evaluator, we examined the strategic plan and proceeded to cut it up into little cards and then to experiment with organizing those cards in different orders on the posters provided. Relatively quickly, a principle of placement emerged. All programmes of work previously listed in the strategic plan, it was decided, were to be detached from previous allocations and re organised into specific 'campaigns'. Indeed, the emphasis would be on the charity as a 'campaigning organisation' once again; as opposed to being the facilitator of a movement. As we arranged the cards in this manner, discussion developed not just around how many campaigns a retrenched organisation could realistically sustain going forward, but on what basis the relationship between roles and persons should now proceed. I think it was Euan who first pinpointed the issue as it evolved throughout the meeting. 'The problem with the way things used to be,' he speculated, 'is that everyone just worked in silos, doing their own thing.' In this kind of observation, he and others meant to critique what sometimes felt like too close an attachment between the perspective of person and office. This was not so much because that individual person risked collapsing into the persona of office, but rather because the office risked being collapsed into the person. Indeed, as the evaluation meeting progressed, a consensus emerged that roles needed to be disconnected from the person of the office-holder and instead reassigned and integrated to specific campaigns. The key relationship, it was proposed, would now be

between person and campaign, viewed as an assemblage of tasks with assigned roles to which individuals must respond.

One consequence of the evaluation meeting was that certain job titles got renamed. Euan, for instance, found himself no longer the Communications Officer, but rather the Press & Campaigns Officer; likewise, the Web & Publishing Officer became known as the Digital Campaigns Officer. But what happens, we might ask, to the office-holder when he or she is made to serve the campaign more than the office? Well one outcome was that roles no longer appeared to be owned by the office; they became instead the property of each campaign. Another outcome was that certain forms of labour, those defined as outside the agreed list of campaigns, became informally reserved to the office-holder. Less roles and more what one member of the evaluation meeting termed 'private work tasks', these activities included labour left over from the strategic plan that office-holders wished or felt obligated to continue or complete on the side. From this perspective, the office remained attached to the person, even as the roles of office became reallocated to the campaigns. In fact, in a strange twist, a new kind of privacy emerged to define that work still conducted through the persona of the office-holder. After the evaluation meeting, team meetings remained as a schedule of updates, but the updating subject became newly split, offering professional outlooks both on the roles assigned them in particular campaigns and on the personal work of office. In this frisson, it remained to be seen where the viewpoint of the individual person might resurface.

Epilogue: from the perspective of Office Manager:

In the years following that evaluation meeting, the numbers of paid staff at the charitable organisation has remained small. As the financial condition eased a little,

so a few office holders have gone back to working full time. A new CEO has been appointed with no previous background in animal welfare, but with a strong professional record in charitable fundraising (it is clear that the re emphasis on advocacy and campaigning did not signal a return to the days before the professionalization of roles and the new managerial culture). The organisation has appointed a new Fundraising Officer, also with no previous personal commitment to animal welfare issues. The Board of Trustees or unpaid governing body of the charity has undergone similar transformations in its composition, with an emphasis on appointing those with identified professional skills (i.e. lawyer, accountant, experts in human resources and corporate charitable sponsorship). While some do have a history of private moral enthusiasm for the values that the organisation promotes, others, including until recently the Chair of the Board, do not. Trustees and new members of staff, he explained to me, can always learn animal welfare principles. In this continuing emergency situation, the overriding ethical obligation of the Board is 'not to mess with people's lives' (by which he meant, the lives of employees). Giving considerable time and his labour for free, the Chair additionally invoked a broader ethical obligation to the sustainment of the charitable sector and to 'good causes' in general; indeed, these were 'personal' principles that the CEO and other new staff members also identified and claimed as the historic basis for their motivation at work.

The notion that private moral enthusiasm may be driven by a desire to be of general assistance to charitable bodies adds a further dimension, I would argue, to an ethics of professionalism. It is one way in which the individual person may reappear and the wider frisson between person and office gets rearticulated. Whether serving the perspective of office or the perspective of roles allotted to an individual campaign, all of the updating subjects of the team meeting may claim a convergence with private

interest or ethical practice. The tension is now between a personal commitment to the cause of animal welfare and a personal commitment to that cause as one among many possible good causes worthy of support.

But in these twists and turns, there is one figure that remains aloof. Having worked for the animal protection charity for over thirty years, Shelia, its Office Manager, is the strongest point of continuity. Her role is about keeping the office of the charity ticking over, ensuring salaries get paid, expenses and bill payments processed and meetings scheduled (her capacity to survive is perhaps testament to her functional importance). Indeed, in many ways, Shelia has been a silent witness of all this organisational change, its ups-and-downs. Employed by the charity at the age of eighteen on what was then known as the Youth Opportunities Programme (a UK government scheme for helping school-leavers into employment that ran during the early 1980s), she was tasked with what the organisation termed 'basic office work'. Interestingly, although the charity throughout this period, and up until the appointment of Eilidh as CEO in 2007, had been run as a small body of dedicated animal welfare campaigners, Shelia was not expected to present an ethical bearing or history of personal commitment to the cause. Much like her later colleague Fraser, she has remained a consistent meat-eater; but unlike him, her lack of engagement in animal welfare debates and her failure to contribute when outrage, for instance, appeared the appropriate moral response, has never been a source of comment or consternation. It may be fair or unfair to assign the difference to the workings or assumptions behind 'class', to the distinctions in expectation that accompany traditional divisions between manual or unskilled labour and mental or professional work; however, the fact remains that Shelia offers an original, solitary perspective on the ethical campaigning organisation. Everyone assumes that for her work is 'just a

job', and a meeting is just part of her duties, a set of observations that this time seems to be unproblematic. Shelia then is the Office Manager, but she is also Shelia, an individual person with a 'personal' outlook that doesn't have to matter. It may be that her anomalous status is crucial.

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[1] Hopgood's description of organizational crisis at Amnesty International during the last decades of the twentieth century is interestingly different (2006: 12). There professionalization and managerialism as espoused by 'modernizers' is also experienced as a threat by those who would claim to be the inheritors of the Amnesty ethos, traditionally grounded in a moral authority of factual or impartial witnessing and in a commitment to the 'mandate' (which limits the definition of Prisoners of Conscience to those who have not used violence). However, that crisis is complicated by a further tension with 'reformers' who wish to divest the organization of its non political status, which to them feels like a constraint on personal moral enthusiasm, and instead commit it to wider ethical campaigning for social change. In this scenario, modernizers and reformers are sometimes in alliance, and the 'keepers of the flame' have to defend themselves against a different charge of impersonality, linked to a perceived rigidity in adherence to the mandate. Both the modernizers and the reformers attack the old moral authority of Amnesty as inflexible, slow to adapt to changing circumstances, and as 'bureaucratic'; for many of them, this is said to be illustrated by the fact that there are just 'too many meetings' (2006: 179).

[2] Kirsch (2011: 216) provides us with an interestingly different example of the assumed actions behind a sparsely constructed agenda form. Working with Pentecostal-Charismatic church bureaucracies in southern Zambia, he says that the blank spaces in the agenda form produced for church meetings was in part intended to index an 'essential unpredictability' of the meeting itself. Church meetings, like services, it was expected, must reveal themselves as divinely inspired events. A meeting that was too organised, that appeared to be too predictably conforming to a documentary structure, risked appearing uninspired. So the blank spaces on the agenda form were meant to leave open the possibility of the 'inpouring of the Holy Spirit.'

[3] Staff at the animal protection charity are well used to the idea that at times the ethical feeling of the person and in particular his or her personal moral enthusiasm may need to be reined in or tamed in order to ensure that high levels of crucial professional competency are maintained. This is a particular problem for the charity's field investigator, whose role includes evidence gathering for archival purposes and sometimes for the purpose of legal prosecution (see Reed 2016). However, this is presented as a struggle or as an exercise in self-disciplining ethical emotion; there is no sense in which it is suspected that the investigator lacks personal conviction.

[4] The comparison with shifts in the organizational ethos of Amnesty International is once again illuminating. As Hopgood (2006: 202) describes it, 'reformers', in tandem with 'modernizers', pushed in the late 1980s and early 1990s for a reorientation from the traditional focus on factually researching and 'adopting victims' (i.e. individual Prisoners of Conscience) to a focus on an issues agenda (under banners such as 'women's rights' or 'economic rights') of 'enpowering individuals' in the world. This integrated with modernizers' desire to produce first and foremost fundraisable programmes of work and to be seen to meet the 'needs of the [Amnesty] movement as consumers' (2006: 134). Interestingly, it also tied into the goal of reformers to replace the ethos of impartiality with that of 'advocacy' (2006: 178). In the new ethos for Amnesty 'the logic of the campaign drives the research programme [in support of the individual cases of Prisoners of Conscience] not the other way around' (2006: 82). In the example of the Scottish Animal

Protection charity I worked with, the shift was very different. The introduction of a new managerial culture in the last years of the first decade of the twenty-first century, including an emphasis on fundraising and the professionalization of roles, actually coincided with a perceived move away from advocacy and campaigning, which up until that moment had been the core work of the organization. In its new role as 'mainstream' movement facilitator, the organizational concern was that it didn't alienate the conscience-bearing subjects out there in the world, at each one's diverse stage of animal welfare awareness, by forms of aggressive campaigning on single issues.

[5] If Hopgood (2006) provides an account of the moral tensions and shifts within a large and expanding organization that defines itself as ethical, then I found myself, quite unexpectedly, bearing witness to a small and ambitious ethical organization's apparently terminal decline. 'When people work in an ethical environment,' Hopgood (2006: 15) observes, 'feelings run high…Where the very ethos and functioning of the organization are constantly at issue, even as the work is done and the organization grows, they run higher still.' One might add that where that organization appears to be dramatically failing, the stakes shift entirely, opening a space for quite sudden organizational redefinition, the further heightening but also radical redirection of staff feelings.